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September 15, 1971

Dr. Louis W. Wendt
7411 Cornwall Place
New Orleans, Louisiana 70126

Dear Dr. Wendt,

Thank you for your note of August 24th telling me "who is Lou Wendt?"

I certainly do empathize with the approach you have outlined - to look more deeply into single gene effects on human behavior. The amount and quality of work that has been done along these lines verges on the trivial. I guess I would expect that a rather large number of mutations will have some behavioral effect, but it may be difficult to verify this with existing assay methods. But I would certainly advocate beginning with known genes so that at least one part of the equation was reasonably stable. One place that I am optimistic this may be pushed a little more vigorously is the examination of the consequences of the sickle cell trait. We have here the opportunity to look at segregating families in which the diagnosis of hemoglobin-S will be unknown to the individual and to his relatives prior to a laboratory test. This is the only way that I can think of to eliminate many difficult sources of bias. The same sort of thing could be done better than it ever has been with markers like the blood groups.

Unfortunately my good advice cannot be coupled with an invitation to pursue these lines of work here. You want to try Vandenberg and Ginsberg (at Storrs, Connecticut) and I will send your dossier in to a correspondent who was looking for candidates for a faculty appointment in behavioral genetics. Beyond that I can little but encouragement.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

JL/rr

WENDT, L.W.